



Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

December 9, 2018

Re: **(WC Docket No. 18-336 and CC Docket No. 92-105**
Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018

On behalf of NAMI NH - The National Alliance on Mental Illness and our Connect Suicide Prevention Program we are writing to express our strong support for assigning an N11 number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. NAMI NH's mission is to improve the lives of all people impacted by mental illness and/or suicide. We have been involved in suicide prevention efforts for many years and our Connect Suicide Prevention program has provided training in over 40 states, 5 countries and to over 40 tribal nations as well as for the Department of Defense and Veterans Administration. We have witnessed first-hand the burden suicide places on individuals, families, schools, workplaces and communities. We have also witnessed the resilience of individuals who have suicidal thoughts and we take inspiration from the stories of people who attempted suicide and are now living fulfilling lives, the lives that have been saved by the Lifeline, and the research which indicates 90% of people who attempt suicide do not go on to die by suicide.

Having been involved in suicide prevention efforts before there was a single phone line for suicide crisis response, NAMI NH can attest to the positive and life-saving impact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline has had in providing a single number which connects directly to certified crisis centers where calls are answered by individuals who are specifically trained to respond effectively in providing life-saving support, intervention and follow up. Wherever we train around the country including among American Indians, Alaskan Natives and Asian Pacific Islanders we find there is very strong support and a critical need the Lifeline.

The recent CDC reports showing rising suicide rates across the US demonstrate a need to make changes in our approach to preventing suicide. NAMI NH firmly believes that assigning a N11 number to the Lifeline will be a significant positive step in raising public awareness and increasing access to immediate crisis response and support available to individuals contemplating suicide and/or their loved ones seeking help for someone they are worried about. We believe it is essential that this be a *distinct* number and not one already in existence.

We oppose suggestions that the existing 211 number can be used for this purpose. Doing so will create confusion; 211 provides an excellent service and is recognized by the general public as an information and resource line. The significant increase in call volume seen by the Lifeline during the past few years shows public recognition and comfort in utilizing the Lifeline for what it is – an immediate *lifeline* for someone in a mental health crisis. Assigning the Lifeline to 211 would also likely result in operators initially answering calls who have not been trained in suicide crisis response, and possible delays while

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calls are routed to an appropriate responder. While there are some 211 centers that are currently valued certified crisis centers for the Lifeline with trained operators, those centers receive calls originating through the current 1-800-273-8255 number. The majority of 211 call centers are not certified to respond to suicide calls. Those 211 centers who do choose to be certified to take lifeline calls will likely be able to do so via a call forwarding system that will not confuse the public about the role of 211 vs an N11 suicide prevention line.

The US Surgeon General has identified Suicide as a public health problem that is largely preventable. The FCC has a unique and timely opportunity to contribute to the public health solutions needed to save lives reduce the burden of suicide by assigning a unique N11 phone number to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. For these stated reason and many more, NAMI NH strongly supports establishing an #N11 number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Thank you for the opportunity to offer input into this important issue. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kenneth Norton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kenneth Norton LICSW
Executive Director

CC: Senator Jeanne Shaheen
Senator Maggie Hassan
Congresswoman Annie Kuster
Congressman Chris Pappas